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Black Alumni Chronicle

New Minority Graduate Program will help UD grow its own faculty

UD has planted the seed so that it may "grow its own" minority faculty members, as well as feed more minority graduate students into the research pipeline.



Curtis Hicks, the University of Dayton director of affirmative action, counsels UD secondary education graduate student Tracy Davis. Hicks will retire from his current position to become coordinator of the Minority Graduate Program.

Beginning this fall, a new Minority Graduate Program will be on line, complete with its first crop of enrollees.

"Basically, institutions have been 'stealing' minority scholars from one another," said Curtis Hicks, who will retire from his position as the director of affirmative action this

summer to become coordinator of the program. "Someone had to take the initiative to add to the pool of graduate students, and consequently faculty members, which all institutions of higher learning have been sharing thus far."

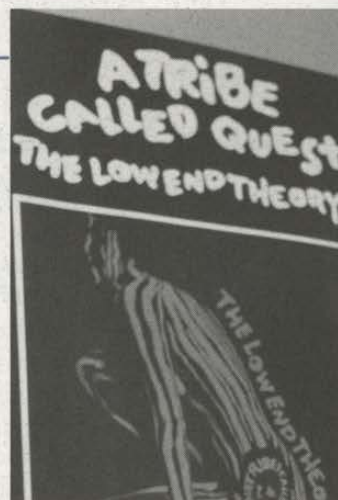
The program will operate out of the Graduate School, adding another element to the school's strategy to increase minority enrollment at the graduate level. In addition, the University will initiate a "cohort" relationship with St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, and with various traditional black colleges and universities, a relationship Hicks said is

essential to the success of the program.

"It's evident that some of the best and the brightest students from many of these historically black colleges are leaving academe, choosing a job over post-graduate studies often because the school does not have a graduate program or has not established a cohort relationship with a school that has a graduate program," Hicks said.

St. Mary's, a Marianist university, has a largely Hispanic and African American student population. The University plans to get direct referrals from the school. The program was part of a planning document that also includes the Graduate Engineering Minority Program (GEM) and undergraduate programs as well, such as the Student Achievement in Research and Scholarship (STARS) mentoring program.

—Lisa E. Williams



Inside

► UD Black Alumni group elects officers and develops charter.

► Graduate student is first Protestant minister from Africa.

► Communication professor finds common thread between Du Bois and rap lyrics.

► MPA grad raises millions for Cleveland area.

► Reunion Weekend is June 8-11.

Rappers, Du Bois deliver same message

Despite the bad *rap* they get for sometimes violent lyrics, rap artists see and accurately describe their world with an insight akin to a double-consciousness the scholar W.E.B. Du Bois experienced and articulated in the early 1900s, says Eric Watts, an assistant professor of communication at UD.

Like Du Bois, rap artists recognize that they live in a society with clashing values, contradictions and abuses. The violence they describe is in part a reflection of the violent nation they live in, Watts argues. Rap provides both the content and forum for debate on these issues and a chance for artists to define themselves within their community.

"Rap music provides artists with the ability to express political ideas, to express an ideology, to confront people about their prejudices and to confront themselves about their own

prejudices as well as the rap music itself being the forum for the debate," he says.

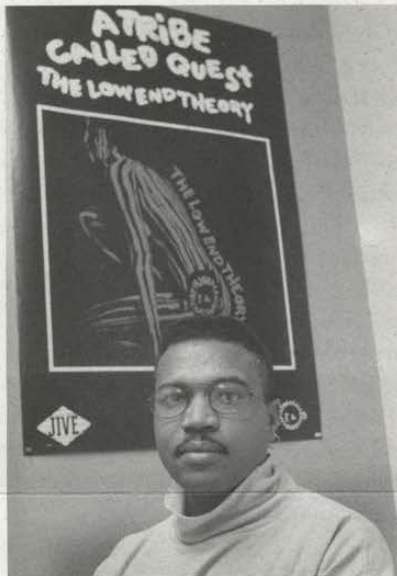
Watts, who received his doctorate from Northwestern University, traces the concept of double-consciousness to Du Bois, who wrote about former slaves stripped of their African heritage by a Eurocentric society that then imposed its own value system on them — a value system that belittled them. Blacks who accepted the dominant culture denied their own selfhood. Those who, despite social forces, managed to hold onto their African identity had to straddle two worlds, creating a double-consciousness that let them scrutinize each.

"You can see beyond what other people can see; it's empowering because you can make changes," Watts says. "But it can also be a curse because you can see things that you don't necessarily want to see," particularly the pain and self-debasing of African Americans who uncritically embrace the Eurocentric view.

Competing world views, painful visions and potential empowerment are apparent in rap as well, says Watts. "What I see in black music and black artistic expression as a whole, is when the issue of self-identity becomes stated, argued or performed, you have a tendency for different value systems that have been historically rooted in different communities clashing in the form itself."

Many of the rap artists he studies view rap music as a redemptive force, a kind of saving grace for America. Not an elitist art form, rap gets its strength from community, he says. "The artist doesn't sit in an ivory tower and reflect on life. The artist hangs in the streets."

— Candace Stuart



Eric Watts, assistant professor of communication, found a common thread between W.E.B. Du Bois' work and today's rap lyrics.

A different walk of life

When Kelvin Sauls came to UD as a campus minister in the fall of 1994, he brought with him a unique perspective. Sauls, a native of South Africa, is UD's only black minister and its first Protestant minister from Africa, a fact which places Sauls in an important role. "Because we all speak from different experiences and different walks of life, we all have different needs. It is important to administer to the unique needs of the African American student on campus," says Sauls.

Sauls, a minister at Marycrest Residence Hall, stresses the importance of multiculturalism on the UD campus. "My message is 'Unity through Diversity.' In all relationships, diversity will be there — it is a given. Unity is a goal." By accepting one another, says Sauls, we affirm what we have in common, providing an opportunity for enrichment. "The UD community has



Kelvin Sauls

been open to these ideas because there is a commitment at all levels to experience and incorporate these lessons."

Sauls one day plans to return to his native South Africa, which he left to come to the United States in 1990.

"My experience at UD has become an integral part of what it means to live in a diverse and interfaith community," he says. "I came here with my tribe being the world. I will return with the world being my tribe."

— Matt Dougherty

A community builder

CHERYL STEPHENS '83

is helping thousands realize the American dream.

As one of few African American women in the urban and rural development field and just a year into her position as director of the Cuyahoga County Department of Development, Stephens, who got a master's in public administration from UD, has been the key player in major building and refurbishing projects. Those projects have put people back to work, helped moderate-income families get housing and added millions of dollars

to the area's economy.

Her most recent accomplishment is the county's offer of a tax abatement with a \$400,000 equipment and machinery loan to American Steel & Wire Co., which plans to build a \$100 million mill in the county.

"Creation of the mill will keep 200 jobs in the area," the former city of Cleveland and Cleveland Heights economic development official said. "This project also will create 300 more jobs in wire and steel for the automotive industry."

She was also instrumental in the

project that brought the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to the area, helping to back an \$11 million bond by the county.

In addition, she's a focal point for the Housing and Urban Development's 108 Loan Guarantee Program, which can generate \$10 million of financing in the county.

"If we leverage that appropriately, it could be \$30 million," she said.

Her current project has been positioning Cleveland nationally as an empowerment zone, one of several cities nationally that will receive \$2 to \$3 million

to redevelop neighborhoods and to do innovative projects to better the area.

"One of the best feelings is to help people accomplish an American dream — get a decent education, have a decent job and live in a decent home," she said. "And here's little ol' me, helping people do that."

"I've been blessed to always be part of a team that can make a difference in the lives of people."

— Lisa E. Williams



Cheryl Stephens

A knack for legalities

VONDA WILLIS '95

didn't think she could make it through law school and graduate this May.

It wasn't that the Cincinnati native couldn't handle the rigors of the school. She graduated reputedly in this year's class.

And it wasn't that she couldn't deal with legal work. She'd spent several years working in mediation and counseling as a social worker hired to work with attorney's clients.

"It was just a foreign concept to me," she said. "My parents never went to

college. And all the propaganda the media feeds you about how elite (law school) is, who gets in and who doesn't, what type of people graduate and who doesn't.

"And you believe it. I believed it. Being black and a woman in the legal field

isn't what people picture as someone in the legal field," she said.

"Now I know better."

Willis, who was recently hired by the state of Oregon as an honors assistant to the attorney general, said that she feels that the biggest benefit she's getting from a law school education is knowing her individual rights.

"I know my rights, my family's rights, black folks' rights," she said. "I'm able to use my UD education when people try to say that I don't have the right to something."

"I know better now and can defend myself and the people I care about against that policeman who stops us for no reason or any other individual who tries to violate our rights."

— Lisa E. Williams



Vonda Willis

Black alumni group elects officers, develops charter

The University of Dayton Black Alumni group has developed a charter and is planning activities for the upcoming year.

The group's mission statement is as follows:

The black alumni of the University of Dayton are committed to providing academic, social, professional and cultural support to black students who are attending or planning to attend the University of Dayton. The black alumni are further committed to broadening, promoting and increasing black alumni interaction and participation.

UDBA meets at 6:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of every month in the Alumni House, 208 L Street, Dayton, Ohio. The officers are: Donald Hubbard '67, president; Bernard McClung '70, vice president; J. Michael Henderson '80, treasurer; and Darryl Fisher '93, secretary. Officer nominations are accepted in April with elections at the May meeting. Membership is available to all black UD graduates with an associate's, bachelor's, master's or doctorate degree.

Activities on the planning table include: Homecoming activities, mentoring programs, scholarship fund raisers and various informal gatherings. Call (513) 229-3299 for more information.



What's up on campus

▶ If you graduated in the class of '45/46, '55, '65, '70, '75 or '85, you'll want to be a part of this year's **Reunion Weekend, June 8-11**. More than 1,000 alumni, friends and family are expected to attend. For information, call Rich Munn, assistant director of alumni relations, at (513) 229-3299.

▶ **Two UD students will travel to Israel** through the Institute of African American/Israel Exchange, a summer

enrichment program available for undergraduate students at Wilberforce and now, UD. Senior Kemba Niambi Hubbard, daughter of Donald Hubbard '67, and junior John Moore, son of Debra Moore '89, will spend the summer in Israel, working on a kibbutz (a collective settlement), visiting the Jewish/Arab Center for Peace, listening to lectures on Arab/Israeli relations and conducting

their own summer fun camps in English for local children. They'll also take two courses at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

▶ Chaminade-Julienne High School senior **Candace Smith is this year's W.S. McIntosh Memorial Leadership Award winner**. The McIntosh award, sponsored by the University of Dayton and the city of Dayton, is a combination scholarship and internship which

provides talented African American students who are active in their community an educational, professional and leadership opportunity.

Smith, a member of the National Honor Society, a volunteer with Miami Valley Hospital and a math tutor, will major in premedicine at UD.



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